8405.cc.36

DIALOGUES

CONCERNING

INNATE PRINCIPLES.

DIALOGUES

DIALOGUES

CONCERNING

INNATE PRINCIPLES.

CONTAINING

AN EXAMINATION OF Mr. LOCKE's DOCTRINE ON THAT SUBJECT.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

THREE DIALOGUES CONCERNING LIBERTY.

Maximeque æſtimare conſcientiam mentis ſuæ, *quam ab diis immortalibus accepimus, quæ à nobis divelli non poteſt*: quæ ſi optimorum conſiliorum atque factorum teſtis in omni vita nobis erit, ſine ullo metu et ſumma cum honeſtate vivemus.

CICERO, Oratio pro et CLUENTIO.

LONDON:
PRINTED FOR J. DODSLEY, PALL-MALL; J. SEWELL, CORNHILL; AND W. FOX, HOLBOURN.
MDCCLXXIX.

DIALOGUES

CONCERNING

INNATE PRINCIPLES.

CONTAINING

AN EXAMINATION OF Mr. LOCKE'S
DOCTRINE ON THAT SUBJECT.

BRITISH MUSEUM

THREE DIALOGUES CONCERNING LIBERTY.

Maximopere adlaborare conclusionem tuendis suis, quam ab illis
minime adeptum, quæ à nobis afferuntur non patet: quæ
si optimorum consiliorum atque Deorum tenis in omni vita
nobis erit, hinc illo metu et summa cum honestate vivemus.

CICERO, Oratio pro et CLUENTIO.

LONDON:
PRINTED FOR J. DODSLEY, PALL-MALL; J. KENNET,
CORNHILL; AND W. FOX, NORWICH.
MDCCLXXIX.

DIALOGUES
ON
INNATE PRINCIPLES.

DIALOGUE I.

AFTER a ſultry day, there is ſomething peculiarly grateful and pleaſing, ſaid I to my friend, in the cool temperature of the evening-air. Let us, then, take a turn, ſaid he, for this I think is ſuch an evening, and after ſuch a day as you deſcribe. We went out, walking gently on until we reached an agreeable eminence, from whence we contemplated, for ſome time, the beautifull ſerenity and clearneſs of

the ſky; the ſoftneſs and ſtillneſs of the trees; and the pleaſing ſilence which reigned around us, the ſun ſenſibly deſcending below the horizon on the one hand; and the enlarged moon aſcending on the other. Then, moving downwards into a fine vale, we entered under a long row of very lofty trees, whoſe tops, joining over a neat walk, caſt a thick ſhade within: along the ſide flowed ſlowly on, a deep and limpid ſtream reflecting the moon, which ſhot ſideways through the trees. We ſoon found ourſelves impreſſed with that pleaſing gloom, and ſober thoughtfulneſs, which ſuch ſcenes do naturally inſpire as night approaches.

I do not wonder, ſaid my friend, at what we hear of the dread and terror, with which guilty ſouls are ſaid to be

frequently ſtricken, when alone in the dead of night: for how ſenſibly are we affected by the mild ſolemnity of this evening ſcene! How naturally do our minds turn inward upon themſelves, penſive and reflecting!

Darkneſs and ſilence exclude the exerciſe of our two moſt active and diverting ſenſes, ſight and hearing. Thoſe pleaſing and amuſing faculties, being thus rendered inactive, and their power of diverting our thoughts being thus taken away; conſcience will make her attacks with ſuperior advantage, and will be found too hard, for impudence to ſilence, or artifice to keep under. She will ſhake the weak fabric of a guilty mind to its very foundations. At ſuch times, happy are they who can rejoice in a good conſcience; for

that alone can give our minds due ſteadineſs and conſtancy.

All this may be true, ſaid I. But if, as Mr. Locke * advances, conſcience be *no innate principle*, but only "our "own opinion or judgement of the "moral rectitude or pravity of our "own actions;" and that opinion be formed in us, by the "education, "company and cuſtoms of our coun-"try;" and if "ſome men can proſe-"cute, what others avoid, with the "ſame bent of conſcience," even to the committing of the moſt enormous crimes, "without any remorſe at all †:" then, thoſe terrors, which you aſcribe to *a guilty*, and that ſteadineſs, which you give to *a good* conſcience, cannot be underſtood to prove any thing to be

* Eſſay, Octavo, p. 34. † P. 34.

be really good, or evil, in the nature of the things, for which conſcience may thus approve or condemn a man: conſcience being nothing more, than what every man for himſelf, fancies it to be: no *innate*, ſteady, or general, principle in human nature. True, ſaid he ironically. And ſo a man may be a confirmed villain, with a clear and good conſcience; and a very honeſt fellow, with a very bad one. What ſtrange errors do the greateſt men ſometimes run into!

Even the errors of ſuch men, replied I, are reſpectable, at leaſt ſo far, as to deſerve the pains of a ſerious refutation, on account of their great credit, and other extraordinary qualities. I have often heard you diſapprove of his arguments againſt *innate principles*, and

of his notions concerning morals in general: and I have on that account, very lately read thoſe parts of his eſſay, which treat of them in particular, and other relative parts: and although I do not find myſelf convinced by him, yet am I not able, eaſily, to point out the fallacy of his reaſoning on thoſe important ſubjects. I will now, therefore, beg the favour of you, to ſhew me wherein you differ from him, if it will not be diſagreeable to you. Not at all, replied he, unleſs the great ingenuity and acuteneſs of our author ſhould happen to make it ſo.

Do you, then, interrogated I, maintain the reality of innate principles? I do, anſwered he in a firm tone; and I hope, for the ſake of ſound morals and of truth, important objects with you,

you, to convince you of that reality. I bowed.—After a long pauſe, he went on thus.

When I take a general view of the arguments, adduced by Mr. Locke, againſt innate moral principles; and when I ſee what he produces, as the moſt indiſputable innate principles, "if any be ſo;" I am inclined to think, there muſt have been ſome very great miſtake, as to the true nature of the things in queſtion; for he lays down certain *propoſitions*, (no matter whether *moral* or *ſcientific*, ſo they be but true) and then proves, that ſuch propoſitions, *conſidered merely as propoſitions*, formed by our rational faculty, after due conſideration of things, as all true propoſitions muſt be, *are not innate*. Nothing more obvious! But

ſurely thoſe whom he oppoſes, muſt, or ought to have meant, (though I cannot ſay I have read their arguments, nor do I mean to anſwer for any one but myſelf;) not that *the propoſitions themſelves* were innate, but, that *the conſcious internal ſentiments*, on which ſuch moral propoſitions are founded, were innate.

He looked on me, interrogatively. I ſaid it might be ſo, and that I ſaw a great difference in thoſe things.

Or perhaps, continued he, the miſtake may have ariſen from following too cloſely the mode, in which it is neceſſary to proceed, in order to acquire a knowledge of certain ſciences, as in geometry: that is, by laying down ſome clear and ſelf-evident axioms, or rational propoſitions. But even here it ſhould be remembered, that in the natures of things,

things, there were *principles*, which had exiſtence, anterior to the formation of theſe axioms or propoſitions, and on which *they* are founded, and on which they depend for *their* exiſtence: as, *extenſion* and *ſolidity*.—I gave an aſſenting inclination of the head.

I cannot, therefore, conceive, added he, that what we ought to underſtand by *innate moral principles*, can by any means, when fairly explained, be imagined to bear any ſimilitude to ſuch propoſitions as Mr. Locke advances, as bidding faireſt to be innate, nor to any other propoſitions. That is, I cannot conceive, that our innate moral principles; our natural ſentiments, or internal conſcious feelings; (name them how you pleaſe) which we derive, and which reſult, from our very nature as creatures

creatures morally relative, are at all like unto any propoſitions whatever.

Who can diſcover any ſimilitude to any conſcious ſentiment of the ſoul, in theſe ſtrangely irrelative propoſitions. *Whatever is, is. It is impoſſible for the ſame thing to be, and not to be?*— Nobody.—

The innate principles of the ſoul, continued he, cannot, any more than thoſe of the body, be propoſitions. They muſt be in us, antecedently to all our reaſonings about them, or they could never be in us at all: for we cannot, by reaſoning, create any thing, the principles of which did not exiſt antecedently. We can, indeed, deſcribe our innate ſentiments and perceptions to each other; we can reaſon, and we can make propoſitions about

about them; but our reaſonings, neither are, nor can create in us, *moral principles*. They exiſt prior to, and independently of, all reaſoning, and all propoſitions about them.

When we are told that *benevolence* is *pleaſing*; that *malevolence* is *painful*; we are not convinced of theſe truths by reaſoning, nor by forming them into propoſitions: but by an appeal to the innate internal affections of our ſouls: and if on ſuch an appeal, we could not feel within the ſentiment of benevolence, and the peculiar pleaſure attending it; and that of malevolence and its concomitant pain; not all the reaſoning in the world could ever make us ſenſible of them, or enable us to underſtand their nature. I do not ſee that it could, ſaid I.

Every

Every being in the univerſe, continued he, muſt receive its *principles* from the Divine Creator of all things. The reaſon of man can create no principles in the natures of things. It will, by proper application, enable him to know many things concerning them, which, without reaſoning, he never could have known; and to explain his knowledge, ſo acquired, to other men: but the *principles* of all created beings are engendered with, and accompany, the exiſtence which they receive from their Creator. And in a point ſo truly eſſential as that of morality is to the nature of ſuch a creature as man; God has not left him without innate and ever-inherent principles. He has not left to the imbecility of human reaſon to create, what he knew it never could

create,

create, and, what we know, it never can create.

Even in the abſtracted ſciences of arithmetic and geometry, reaſon can create no principles in the natures of the things treated of. It can lay down axioms, and draw up propoſitions concerning numbers, extenſion, and ſolidity; but numbers, extenſion, and ſolidity, exiſted prior to any reaſoning about them.

And here I muſt obſerve, that the aſſent or diſſent that we give to propoſitions in theſe ſciences, which are but little intereſting *to our nature*, is drawn from a ſource widely different from that which we give to *moral* propoſitions. Thus, when we are told, that the three angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles, and ſee the demonſtration;

demonſtration; we ſay ſimply, *true*. That they are equal to three right angles; *falſe*. Theſe things being irrelative to morals, they move no conſcious ſentiment, and do therefore only receive our bare aſſent or diſſent as a mere object of ſenſe; in the ſame manner as when we ſay a thing is, or is not, black or white, or round or ſquare; we uſe our eyes, and are ſatisfied. But the truth or falſehood of moral propoſitions muſt be judged of, by another meaſure; through a more intereſting medium: we muſt apply to our *internal ſenſe*; our divine monitor and guide within; through which, the juſt and unjuſt, the right and wrong, the moral beauty and deformity, of human minds, and of human actions, can only be perceived. And this *internal*

ſenſe,

ſenſe, muſt moſt undoubtedly be *innate*, ſince, as we have already ſhewn; it could not otherwiſe have exiſtence in us; we not being able, by reaſoning, or by any other means, to give ourſelves any *new ſenſe*; or to create, in our nature, any principle at all. I therefore think Mr. Locke, in ſpeaking of innate *moral* principles, ought, at leaſt, to have made a difference between propoſitions relative to morals, and thoſe which have no ſuch relation.—He paufed.—It ſeems ſo, ſaid I: and ſeeing him ready to ſay more, I begged he would proceed.—He continued thus.

If we, in this matter, pay any regard to the analogy of nature, can we rationally allow innate principles, or inherent natural laws, to all the beings we have any knowledge of, and deny them to

man

man alone? Were we to conſider his ſoul and body as diſtinct natures, and not as too intimately united, perhaps, to be eaſily ſeparated, could we allow innate principles to the body, and none to the ſoul, but what it muſt create for itſelf?—It muſt be abſurd.—It muſt be abſurd to ſuppoſe that man, who is utterly incapable of thoroughly underſtanding the true natures of thoſe principles, by which every other being exiſts and is actuated; ſhould be left to contrive and create principles, for the conduct of the moſt refined part of the creation that we are acquainted with; for *the human ſoul*. Aſſuredly, as all created beings are endued with certain natural principles, *neceſſarily innate*, and ever-inherent in them; and which make their ſeveral different

natures

natures to be what they are; ſo man, or the ſoul of man, cannot, as a created being, exiſt without innate, and ever-inherent principles.

Seeing he expected a reply; I muſt confeſs, ſaid I, that I do not find myſelf very able to diſpute the truth of your doctrine with you; you will, therefore, excuſe me, if I call in Mr. Locke to my aid. As you pleaſe, ſaid he, ſmiling.

Mr. Locke then, you know, returned I, has uſed ſeveral ways to prove that we have no innate principles: and though I clearly ſee that your arguments do make generally againſt them all; yet I ſhall be better ſatisfied, if you will permit me to particularize ſome of them, if it be only to hear, from you, a refutation of them.—He bowed.—

You know, continued I, Mr. Locke

advances, that principles cannot be innate; unleſs their ideas be alſo innate. "For, ſays he, if the *ideas* "be not innate, there was a time "when the mind was without thoſe "*principles*; and then they will not "be innate, but be derived from ſome "other original. For where the *ideas* "themſelves are not, there can be no "knowledge, no aſſent, no mental or "verbal *propoſitions* about them*."

Now is there nothing in what he advances in this place, that will affect your doctrine of innate principles? I think not, anſwered he.

For granting that we have *no innate ideas*; it does by no means from thence follow, as he ſays, that we have *no innate principles*. *Ideas*, ſimply conſidered, are very different things, from

* P. 47. *innate*

innate moral principles; or from any *other principles*, which conſtitute the natures of things. If I have not already ſhewn, I will, by and by, endeavour more clearly to ſhew, that the propoſitions we compoſe according to our ideas of things, are *nothing but propoſitions*: they are not really the *principles* of the things treated of: the principles of the things treated of are naturally inherent, and exiſt perpetually in them, whether our ideas, or propoſitions, concerning them, be true or falſe.

But in the part quoted, there is a fallacy. He ſays, "if the *ideas* be not "innate, there was a time when the "mind was without thoſe *principles*." The concluſion, you ſee, is vague and deluſive. The only juſt concluſion he

could have drawn, was; that, if the *ideas* be not innate, there was a time, when the mind was without *thoſe ideas, out of which, the propoſitions are formed,* which I call *principles.* I doubt not, that you perceive, they are very improperly ſo called, in the preſent queſtion. For Mr. Locke thus confounds, the principles of our nature, and the ideas contained in the propoſitions he names, together, as if they were the ſame things: but they cannot be ſo, becauſe the one receives exiſtence, from the prior exiſtence of the other. That is, our moral ideas receive *their exiſtence* from the *prior exiſtence* of our innate moral ſentiments or principles: as our ideas of light and figure, are derived from the *prior exiſtence* of ſight.

In this queſtion, the matter, as too frequently

frequently happens, has been puzzled and obſcured, by the miſuſe of words. Axioms, and allowed propoſitions, are called *principles*. But they are *only principles*, formed by the human mind, in aid of its own weakneſs; which, in reaſoning, can proceed but a little way, without proved, or granted, propoſitions to reſt on. They might, perhaps, with much more propriety, be called helps, aſſiſtances, or ſupports to the imbecility of the human mind, than principles of things. The principles, which naturally inhere in every ſpecies of created beings, are of a nature, totally different.

It ſeems, then, ſaid I, that you agree with Mr. Locke, that neither *ideas* or *propoſitions* can be innate: but you differ from him, by denying any *propoſitions*

whatſoever, to be properly the *principles* of any ſpecies of beings; and by affirming, that both *ſpeculative* and *practical* propoſitions are mere creatures of human invention: which whether they be true or falſe; that is, founded in the natures of things or not; the true natures and principles of things remain unalterably the ſame. That is my meaning, replied he; and that, therefore, moſt of the arguments advanced by Mr. Locke againſt innate principles are nothing, or but very little, to the purpoſe: becauſe they only tend to combate things as innate principles, which are nothing like innate principles: and, if it be not too bold a thing to ſay of ſo penetrating a genius, he ſeems only to have been fighting with a phantom of his own creating.

Indeed,

Indeed, highly as I think of his genius and integrity, I ſhould have much doubted of his ſincerity in this doctrine, if we had not frequently ſeen men of the firſt rate abilities, ſuffer themſelves to be carried into great abſurdities, by their fondneſs for a favourite ſyſtem, or, by too haſty a deſire of forming a perfect one.

It is certain, however, that nothing can be more excellent than his work as far as it regards our manner of acquiring ideas, by *ſenſation* and *reflection*. But what ſhould move him to advance, that we have no other way of acquiring ideas; why he ſhould exclude our *moral ſenſe*, and deny even its exiſtence, with the pains of ſo much acute falſe reaſoning, I ſhall not, at preſent, endeavour to explain. But having ſo deter-

mined, he found it neceſſary to remove all notions of innate *moral* principles (and with them, all other innate principles) out of the way, in the beginning of his book: for had they been granted, *another ſource* of ideas muſt have been admitted, beſide thoſe of *ſenſation* and *reflection*, as explained by Mr. Locke. And I ſhall not heſitate to affirm, that a clear and indiſputable explication of this mode of acquiring ideas, would have coſt him much more pains and trouble, than all the reſt of his moſt ingenious work. For human actions and opinions, in the ordinary courſe of things, paſs away in ſo rapid a ſucceſſion, as to leave no laſting traces behind them; nothing fixed, to which we may refer for a renewal, or a correction, of our moral ideas concerning them,

them, if our memory prove deficient. And, unleſs they be recorded with extraordinary accuracy, they can ſeldom be contemplated a ſecond time, in preciſely the ſame light, in which they were viewed at the firſt.

But all thoſe ideas, which ariſe in our minds, by the impreſſions which external things make upon our ſenſes, being derived from objects of fixed and laſting natures; when our memory fails us, or when we doubt the clearneſs or preciſion of our ideas, we can, generally, refer with eaſe to the objects themſelves, and can renew, or rectify, our ideas at pleaſure. This renders geometry ſo certain and indiſputable a ſcience: for, the leaſt variation or incorrectneſs in our ideas, may be diſcovered and corrected, by recurring to the

figures

figures themſelves, which, through the medium of ſight, convey, invariably, the ſame ideas to the mind. Nor is there any impediment; any thing naturally intereſting to our affections, in the nature of the things themſelves, that ſhould make us ſee them falſely, or apply them irrationally.

But it is not ſo in moral ſcience: it more cloſely concerns, and is more deeply intereſting to us, in every point of view: it therefore throws more impediments in our way, to a right underſtanding and clear comprehenſion of its truths. Our early-imbibed prejudices, miſ-placed affections, ill-governed paſſions, and jarring intereſts, diſtort and falſify our ideas in moral ſubjects extremely, nor can a juſt and natural repreſentation of our moral ſentiments,

or feelings, take place in our minds, until thoſe deluſive, and turbulent, enemies to moral truth, be ſubdued, or properly corrected. And although to men whoſe affections and paſſions are duly tempered, and minds naturally adjuſted, moral truths may be as clear as mathematical ones; yet, from the unhappy circumſtances above-mentioned, they are generally much more clouded and obſcured; and are, therefore, perpetually ſubjected to tedious and unpleaſant diſputations: a very untoward and diſguſting circumſtance without a doubt *. But which you think, replied I, not enough ſo, to have cauſed Mr. Locke to deny the exiſtence of *innate moral principles*; things,

* Mr. Locke, in Eſſay, Vol II. pages 174 to 177, has clearly pointed out the difficulty of fixing with preciſion the meanings of moral words.

things, ſo eſſentially intereſting to the cauſe of virtue: and which, you conſider as a ſource of ideas, not comprehended in what he underſtands by *ſenſation* and *reflection*. And are not you of the ſame mind? interrogated he, in a lively tone. At preſent I am, anſwered I; but yet I muſt beg, with Mr. Locke, to be more clearly informed concerning the nature of thoſe innate principles *: for, ſays he, "nobody has yet ventured to "give a catalogue of them."

By the demand of a catalogue of them, ſaid my friend, he ſeems only to expect a ſtring of moral maxims or *propoſitions*: but theſe, we have agreed, with him, are not *innate principles*: we have agreed, that they are not *properly* principles of things at all. But, before we attempt to explain farther,

* Eſſay, p. 39. what

what we mean by innate moral principles, it may not be improper to endeavour to define, what we would be underſtood to ſignify by the word *principle*, ſo far, at leaſt, as it regards our preſent inquiry: though, perhaps, when we come to ſpeak of *any innate principle*, after deſcribing it, as well as we can, we may be allowed to ſay, what Mr. Locke ſays of the faculty of *perception*, which I preſume is *innate**, viz. "Whoever reflects on what paſſes in "his own mind, cannot miſs it; and "if he does not reflect, all the words "in the world cannot make him have "any notion of it†." So, our moral principles being innate, and of a ſimple nature; when we would deſcribe the ſenſations, or ſentiments they produce in us; if by turning men's minds inward

* P. 105. † See alſo, p. 185. Chap. XX.

ward upon their own feelings, we cannot make them perceive what they are; words, in any other view will be vain and uſeleſs, Yet in eſſentials, all men muſt be ſenſible of them, and capable of perceiving them, clearly enough, in plain, practical caſes, for all the good purpoſes of human life: except, indeed, ſuch perſons as Mr. Locke very ſtrangely, not to ſay prepoſterouſly, ſelects, as the moſt likely to preſerve a pure and perfect ſenſe of them: viz. idiots, infants, and madmen—He was going to proceed, in the definition of his meaning by the word *principle*, when finding we were juſt at home, he declined it till another opportunity; to which, I aſſented, on a promiſe, that it ſhould be early next morning. And thus ended our firſt dialogue.

DIALOGUE

DIALOGUE II.

ON retiring to my chamber, reflecting on the discourse of my friend; I found my mind impressed with a pleasing satisfaction and composure; and, somewhat disburthened of that uncertainty and confusion, which the arguments against innate principles produce, in moral subjects. It is, certainly, highly inimical to the cause of virtue, to introduce doubts concerning the existence of moral principles. If the mind do not perceive such principles to be fixed, and general in human nature; and, not ever fluctuating, and varying, according to times, circumstances, customs, fashions,

and

and opinions; it cannot, rationally, depend upon any principles at all. It muſt remain ever perplexed and wavering, and utterly devoid of that ſtability, and that mental determination, which are the principal ſupports of all virtuous atcheivements. That manly firmneſs and conſtancy, which is ſo neceſſary in all great and worthy deſigns, and which is the effect of a generous affection for truth and juſtice, requires ſteady and invariable principles to ſupport it in us. It ſhould ſeem, therefore, much more conſonant to the character of genuine philoſophy, to endeavour, to ſtrengthen and confirm the mind, in juſt principles; than, to puzzle and confound it, with difficulties and vain objections. For, though, the human underſtanding may be, nay muſt

muſt be, incapable of ſolving many difficulties in the natures of things: yet to ſtick to thoſe difficulties tenaciouſly, and to apply them continually, to prove the uncertainty of our knowledge, and to leave us perplexed and confounded, is, doubtleſs, but a very untoward, left-handed, kind of philoſophy. In her genuine courſe, ſhe leads us gently on as far as our underſtandings will carry us, and we can ſee our way clearly: when difficulties occur, (and they muſt frequently occur, in works formed by infinite wiſdom, when examined by ſuch minds as ours) ſhe ſhews us their nature and extent, and explains them, (if at all explicable) as well, and as far as ſhe can; continually keeping in view, the nature of man, and his true

intereſt and proper buſineſs upon earth.

In the morning, I roſe with the ſun, and traverſed the garden, waiting with impatience the riſing of my friend. It was not long, (though I thought it ſo) before he came down, and joined me, with a ſmile, in one of the walks. After taking a turn or two, and diſcourſing lightly on the beauties of the objects around us; I reminded him of his promiſe, and of the ſubject, with which he concluded his diſcourſe, the preceding evening. Your demand is juſt, ſaid he: and after muſing a ſhort time, he began thus.

In all ſubjects of reaſoning, we can never be too careful, in fixing the meaning of our words; eſpecially of thoſe words, on the clear underſtanding of which, the knowledge of the matter

matter in queſtion principally depends. We will therefore endeavour to explain our ideas of the word *principles*, as employed in our preſent inquiry, with as much preciſion as we can.

I humbly conceive, then, continued he, that no thing, or being, in the univerſe, could poſſibly exiſt, or be what it is, without certain neceſſarily-inherent, qualities, properties, energies, or laws; which together form and conſtitute its nature, and cauſe it to be ſpecifically what it is. Theſe neceſſarily-inherent, qualities, properties, energies, or laws, whatever names they may be called by, are what I would now be underſtood to ſignify by the word *principles*, as being *prime*, or *firſt*, in the conſtituting of the natures of all things. Thus all the animal crea-

tion, all the vegetable, have their *general*, and their *ſpecific*, principles. Earth, water, air, fire, have their *principles*. The earth, as *a whole* in itſelf, or, as *a part* in our planetary ſyſtem, has its *principles*. Our planetary ſyſtem as *a whole*, or, as *relative* to other ſyſtems, or to the univerſe, has its *principles*. The univerſe, as *a whole*, muſt alſo have its *principles*, by which, all its parts are made relative, and are chained and united together; though in a manner totally incomprehenſible by any, but its all-wiſe and all-powerful Creator. But of Him, the great firſt cauſe! the principle of all principles! Of Him, from whom, the whole univerſe, and all that it contains, derive their principles, what ſhall we ſay, or how ſpeak, with propriety? So weak, ſo

incompetent,

incompetent, are we, that we are loſt in the contemplation of his nature; and hardly know how to diſcourſe of him with tolerable ſenſe, or without abſurdity, and danger of impiety and profanation.—I bowed aſſentingly.—However, we may truly ſay, continued he, that, with regard to the relation we ſtand in to God, and to his concatenated creation, we cannot poſſibly ſerve him better, or render him juſter worſhip, than by paying the ſtricteſt attention to thoſe *innate principles*, with which he has endued our nature; and by which, he has clearly pointed out (if we ſuffer not our attention to be diverted by falſe lights) our road to what is moſt eligible and beſt, both in our *moral* and *phyſical* conduct in this life.

After a ſhort pauſe, ſeeing me deeply engaged in reflection, I ſpeak of theſe things, ſaid he, only to explain my meaning, by the word *principles*, in its moſt extenſive ſenſe: but with all due conſciouſneſs of human imbecility, when we preſume to diſcourſe concerning things of infinite extent. But I take ſuch to be the notions we muſt naturally, and do moſt uſually, entertain of the *One* general or univerſal principle, whenever we think attentively or rationally about Him. Yet ſtill we muſt obſerve, that we are not capable of attaining any *certain knowledge* of the *true nature* of ſuch a principle: we can only perceive it as a cauſe, by the effects, but, we know not how it cauſes.—He looked on me.—I do not object, ſaid I.—Then we will deſcend

a little, continued he; for our minds are better adapted to more confined views, and to the conſideration of parts, than of the whole, of the creation.

In nature, things are diſtinguiſhed from each other, and are arranged into *kinds* and *ſpecies*, and we do no more, than follow her, in ſo conſidering them. The general laws, by which, every *kind* exiſts, and is moved and actuated; are the *general principles* of that *kind*. The particular laws, by which, every *ſpecies* exiſts *differently*, and is moved and actuated *differently*, from its kind; are its particular, or *ſpecific*, *principles*. Thus every *kind*, and *ſpecies*, of beings, have *principles* naturally inherent in them. True, ſaid I; but do we know what thoſe principles are, or how they act in them, ſo as to produce the

varieties, which we ſee in their natures? Perhaps not, replied he; for, of the principles of beings without us, we can only judge by the perceptible effects, which they exhibit: nor can their *true internal nature and manner of acting*, be ever underſtood by us, any farther than by conjecture, from the effects they produce. Yet are we certain of the neceſſary exiſtence of ſuch principles in their natures, as cauſe the production of ſuch differences and diſtinctions, as mark the various kinds and ſpecies. A farther knowledge, it ſeems, was not deſigned for man; nor, indeed, does it appear to me, that it would be, either uſeful or convenient, in our preſent ſtate, and ſhort duration here: it would only draw us more, from our true and proper buſineſs;

from

from the ſtudy of ourſelves, and of the nature of our *kind:* from which, we already find, but too many frivolous occaſions to wander. It has long been an applauded faſhion, to make collections, and to roam abroad in ſearch of rarities and monſters for others to gaze at; indulging a ſort of idle induſtry, and vain curioſity, concerning things, but little relative, or, perhaps quite foreign, to our nature: and ſuch trifling, is dignified with the honourable names of learning and knowledge. So much engaged *without doors*, however, it cannot be, but our affairs, *at home* muſt ſuffer; and our moſt intereſting concerns lie neglected. For, though I do, by no means, agree with thoſe, who think, the moſt difficult of all knowledge, is the knowledge of ourſelves;

ourſelves: yet, I am very certain, that men, whoſe minds are continually employed in extraneous ſubjects of ſcience; or in thoſe amuſing external arts, which are irrelative to moral life; are, but very rarely, even tolerable proficients, in the home-ſcience. Indeed, it is not to be expected, that a man ſhould be ſkilful in an art, which he has never allowed himſelf time to think of, or leiſure to attend to.

I am very ſenſible of the faſhionable folly, ſaid I; and know, very well, at how cheap a rate, literary diſtinctions are purchaſed: and I muſt agree, with you, that a mind much addicted to extraneous reſearches, is not likely to be very well informed at home: but I ſhould be glad to know, why you think, the attainment of a knowledge of ourſelves, is leſs difficult than commonly imagined?

gined? I do not think, replied he, that any kind of knowledge can be acquired without attention and ſtudy: but, the knowledge we may attain of our own nature, and principles, is more clear and more certain, comes to us eaſier and with better evidence, than we can poſſibly acquire concerning the nature and principles of any other creatures. What man can doubt, that it is more eaſy for him, to know himſelf, than it is for him, to know any other man; or, than it is, for any other man to know him? If a man be incapable of knowing himſelf, a ſubject, with which he is ſo intimately, ſo ſenſibly, united; whoſe principles, ſentiments, perceptions, thoughts, and deſigns, he can always inſpect, and know without diſguiſe, whenever he

pleaſes

pleaſes to view them impartially; I ſay, if he be incapable of knowing himſelf, with the aid of ſo much previous, clear, intelligence; how much more incapable muſt he be, of knowing, any other man, whoſe thoughts and deſigns, he cannot be ſo ſure of; or, any other creature, whoſe nature and true principles, can never, with certainty, be known to him? In ſhort, the truth is this, that unleſs a man be a tolerable adept in the knowledge of himſelf, and can perceive all the various turnings and windings of the human affections and paſſions, and their effects in his own heart; he can have no rule or meaſure, by which, he may form, and regulate, his judgement, concerning the actions and intentions of others. I think you are right, ſaid I.——It is probably,

probably, therefore, a truer maxim, continued he, to ſay, that it is eaſier for a man to know himſelf, than to know any other man, or any other creature: and that, a man's knowledge of other men, and of other creatures, will very much increaſe, as he advances in the knowledge of himſelf, and of his own nature. For his moſt rational conjectures, concerning the natures of other animals, are principally founded on what he is conſcious of in himſelf, as an animal. —He ſaw I did not incline to object.— Let us, then, digreſs no farther, ſaid he; but return to our ſubject.

There is another kind of principles, which is intirely of human creation, and which, can only, with propriety, be called *principles*, as they are the *beginnings* of human reaſoning. Theſe

uſually

uſually paſs under the denominations of, data, axioms, maxims, rules, &c. They are invented and formed, by the human mind, in aid of its own imbecility. They are foundations, which it finds itſelf obliged to lay, before it can proceed, in the reaſoning art, to the building of any conſiderable ſtructure. They may be ſolid, or ſandy; true, or falſe. In proportion to *their* truth or falſehood, will be the *ſtability*, or *inſtability*, of the ſtructure we raiſe upon them. In ſhort, they are merely inventions of the human mind, to facilitate its own progreſs in the ſearch of leſs evident, and more important truths; or, to enable us to prove to others (granting them to be true) that ſome other propoſitions muſt be true, which had been denied, or, of which there

ſeemed

ſeemed to be ſome doubt. But it is important to the matter we, at preſent, have in view, to remember, that, this ſort of principles, can only be called *principles*, relatively to the human mind, in the exerciſe of its reaſoning faculty; and that, the true and genuine principles of things, which are formed and conſtituted in their natures, neither are, nor are at all like unto, thoſe data, axioms, rules, or maxims, of human invention; but exiſt quite independently of, and prior to any ſuch things.——Well, ſaid I, but what do you infer from all this?——Why, do you not ſee, anſwered he, that all the *principles*, which Mr. Locke advances and refutes, as innate (if any, ſays he, can be ſo) are of this latter kind?—— I do, returned I: but what then?——

Why,

Why, then, ſaid he, Mr. Locke, with the greateſt reſpect be it ſpoken, has very much miſ-ſpent his time and pains; having only proved, that certain data or maxims, are not *innate principles* of the human nature: which, I hope you now perceive, (though true) was nothing to the purpoſe; the innate principles of our nature, and ſuch data or maxims being quite different things.—They ſeem ſo, indeed, replied I; and I perceive, by your explication, that data or axioms, are of human invention, but that the principles, which conſtitute the natures of things, are of divine origin. But, permit me to trouble you a little farther. If certain moral maxims, be found to be indiſputably juſt, and agreeable to the true intereſts and happineſs of mankind

(though

(though of human invention merely) may they not ſerve us in the regulation of our conduct as effectually, as any innate principles whatever? Or, in other words, is not our reaſon given us, to ſupply, in ſome degree, the place of innate moral principles?

This, returned he, is what Mr. Locke would have us to underſtand; but, moſt certainly, it cannot be ſo: for, as we have ſhewn before, we are not able, by reaſoning, to create principles in things. The principles of all things exiſt in them, before we begin to reaſon about them; or they never could be made to exiſt at all, by any human power.

Our reaſon muſt always have ſome foundation to build upon; that foundation muſt exiſt, before we begin to

reaſon, or we could not reaſon at all. We can neither perceive, or underſtand, any thing as a ſubject of reaſoning, whoſe principles do not exiſt prior to our reaſoning. Thus, *moral maxims*, when true, muſt be founded on *ſome principles* in the human nature, which are originally inherent in man: and our reaſoning, in the formation of *ſuch maxims*, muſt be regulated, by thoſe *originally-inherent principles*. Had we not ſuch principles innate, or born with us, our reaſon could have no ground to go upon, concerning morals: for, reaſoning could never make a man, *devoid of innate moral principles*, perceive the juſtice or truth of any moral maxim. Indeed, without ſuch principles, he could never know any thing at all of moral maxims: for when

any

any moral maxim is propoſed to us, we can neither underſtand it, or examine into its truth or falſehood, without referring to our internal touchſtone, our innate moral ſentiments; they alone enable us to underſtand it; and by them only, can we judge of its truth or falſehood: for its truth or falſehood to us, depends intirely upon its agreement or diſagreement with them.—My feelings, ſaid I, will not permit me to contradict you. But Mr. Locke, you know, rather triumphantly, demands a catalogue of theſe principles, which, he ſays, no one "has ventured "yet to give." I underſtand you, replied he: you deſire to know what I have to ſay upon that ſubject. I do, returned I.

You know, then, continued he, that when Mr. Locke demands a catalogue

of *innate principles*, he means a catalogue of *propoſitions*, ſuch as he had before proved to be not *innate*; and ſuch as you and I have agreed, cannot properly be called *principles of our nature* at all. Theſe, therefore, can be but little to our preſent purpoſe. But, nevertheleſs, we have innate moral principles, which do not conſiſt of propoſitions or maxims; but of internal ſentiments, or conſcious feelings, prior to all moral maxims; and without which (as you have ſeen) morals could have no foundation in nature, nor could be underſtood.

All right and wrong, juſt and unjuſt, which concern the nature, and the happineſs of man, is perceived by him, through what is innate, and formed in him in the very conſtitution

of his nature; or he could never perceive, or underſtand them at all.

If any one require *a catalogue*, or rather an exact deſcription of theſe innate internal ſentiments; I can only tell him what I feel within myſelf; and deſcribe to him, how the actions of men, and how the relations of their actions, when I hear or read them, affect my nature, and move my conſcious feelings. Nor can he have any other rule, of judging of the truth or falſehood of my ſentiments, but by reference to his own conſcience, by which only, it is poſſible for him to form any rational judgement.

Mr. Locke * himſelf does not think a better explanation can be given of any ſimple perception, or idea, than

 that

* Vol. II. page 28, &c.

that we do perceive it: which is as much as to ſay, thus I am impreſſed by the object; thus it affects me; how are you impreſſed? how does it affect you? This doctrine, you ſee, ſuppoſes, that all men being of the ſame kind, have the ſame natural principles in them, (with the degrees only of more or leſs perfect) and that, therefore, their perceptions muſt be the ſame, or very nearly the ſame: and, indeed, were they not ſo, they could never underſtand each others meaning.

We do not, therefore, contend about *innate moral principles*, as if they were *innate propoſitions*, or *innate ideas*; but as principles naturally inherent in mankind, which being excited to action, raiſe in our minds *ideas*, and concerning which we can make *propoſitions*.

We

We can deſcribe them to each other, and can compare our feelings and perceptions of them together, as we can thoſe of ſight, or of any other ſenſe. But take away the *innate principles*, *the ſight*, and *the moral ſenſe*, and every one perceives, that neither reaſoning, argumentation, explanation, or deſcription, in ſhort, that no human contrivance can poſſibly make the blind-man underſtand, any thing, concerning objects of ſight; or the unconſcious man, any thing concerning moral truths. If our conſcience, or moral ſenſe, were not born with us, we, moſt certainly, never could be made to feel or underſtand any thing concerning morals; nor could we ever reaſon at all about them: we ſhould be intirely ignorant of any ſuch thing.

You muſt now, no doubt, perceive, continued he, how abſurd it would be, to demand a *catalogue* of our innate moral principles when the true nature of them is rightly underſtood. It would be to demand a catalogue of all the conſcious ſentiments, excited in us, in all the various actions and circumſtances, which occur to us in human life; in which right or wrong, juſt or unjuſt, moral beauty or deformity, are concerned. It were as reaſonable to demand a catalogue of all the various ſenſations excited in us, by the operations of outward things, on our other ſenſes. The only rational attempt to deſcribe, or give a catalogue, of our innate moral principles, would be to copy the purer ſentiments of the beſt moraliſts, who have, with the ſoundeſt heads, juſtly

and

and naturally depicted, the conſcious ſentiments of the worthieſt hearts: which would be no more, than if, being curious in viſion and the nature of ſight, we were to conſult the ableſt maſters in optics, and were to give a catalogue of their experiments and opinions in that ſcience. But rather, than you ſhould have that trouble, ſaid I, we will talk no more of *a catalogue*. He ſmiled; and after a ſhort ſilence, he proceeded to ſhew, that conſcience, or innate moral principles, muſt be the ſame in all men.

You know, ſaid he, that Mr. Locke himſelf, preſuming that creatures of the ſame ſpecies, are endued with powers, faculties, or *inborn* principles, (though he will not ſay *innate*) which are the ſame, in every indivi-

dual

dual of the ſpecies, *not defective*; ſeems not to doubt, that the ſimple ideas conveyed to the mind by the ſenſes, (though inexplicable by words) are the ſame in all men; or ſo far the ſame, as to enable them, very well, to underſtand each others meaning. And this, no doubt, is true, with the exception of more or leſs perfect faculties; and conſequently, of more clear or more obſcure, more extenſive or more confined, ideas: for, were it not true, individuals could no more underſtand each other, than if they were creatures of quite *different ſpecies*. If their natural faculties had not a very ſtrong ſimilarity; if the manner of their operation were not very much the ſame; how could they poſſibly, nearly penetrate each others thoughts, or con-

ceive ideas, enough ſimilar, to enable them to hold any communication?

But, this being allowed, it muſt equally hold in our innate moral principles, which, though as to ſtrength, or weakneſs, clearneſs or obſcurity, they be ſomewhat diverſified in different men; yet they muſt be ſo much of the *ſame nature*, as to differ only in *degree*, not in *kind*; otherwiſe, we could hold no intelligible converſation about morals.—Certainly not, ſaid I.

How very inconſiſtent then, continued he, is the doctrine advanced by Mr. Locke, when he ſays, that conſcience "is nothing elſe but *our own* "*opinion, or judgement* *, of the moral "rectitude or pravity of our own "actions. And if conſcience be a "proof

* P. 34.

" proof of innate principles, *contraries* " may be innate principles: ſince " ſome men, *with the ſame bent of con-* " *ſcience*, proſecute what others avoid." If this were true, if there were nothing internally the ſame; nothing common, and *inborn* in the human ſpecies, concerning moral rectitude or pravity; but if every individual, in that point, were diſtinct, and a ſpecies in himſelf; and could form moral ſentiments, which might, or might not, according to accidents or his own fancy, have relation to, or correſpondence with, thoſe of other men; all intelligible communication on that ſubject muſt ceaſe; and all the doctrines of morality, among creatures thus diſtinct and irrelative, muſt, not only, be impertinent and incomprehenſible to each other;

other; but muſt remain utterly devoid of that general nature, or thoſe ſpecific qualities, which only, could render ſuch doctrines uſeful to us, as creatures of the ſame kind, nature, and conſtitution.

All thoſe faculties, qualities, or properties, continued he, which are compriſed in the formation and conſtitution of an individual, of any ſpecies of creatures, muſt be comprehended in every individual of the *ſame* ſpecies, *not defective*; otherwiſe he cannot be deemed to be of the *ſame* ſpecies, but of *another*. And, if any individual be born *defective*, or, without ſome faculty or property common to his ſpecies; (as we have ſhewn of the blind man) of things acquirable by, or relative to, that faculty, he can

receive

receive no knowledge from, nor have any intelligible communication with, thoſe who are not ſo defective.

Unleſs thoſe faculties and qualities, which conſtitute a ſpecies, were the ſame in every individual of that ſpecies, that conſent of nature, or ſympathetic charm, which ariſes from the ſameneſs of our feelings; and which draws together and unites the individuals of every ſpecies; could have no exiſtence. They could by no other means, than by the identity of the principles of their nature, be thus inclined towards each other: nor could they by any other means, conceive any thing of each other's nature, any more than if each individual were a diſtinct ſpecies.

If all men, then, be of the ſame ſpecies; all the faculties, qualities, or properties,

properties, which go to the conſtituting or making of a man, muſt be the *ſame* in all men. That they are the ſame is clear, becauſe men do underſtand each other, when they converſe together concerning them: they differ (as we have ſaid) only in degree, Now, conſcience muſt be of this number; it is a quality, or property common to human nature, and muſt be the *ſame* in all men, like every other quality or property; varying only in the degrees, of ſtronger or weaker, clearer or more obſcure. Men underſtand each other when they ſpeak of conſcience, which, were it not the *ſame* in all, they could not do. It is, therefore, the *ſame* in all men; or it is nothing that can be uſeful to them.

If conſcience were, as Mr. Locke pretends,

pretends, only the *opinion* or *judgement* of every individual, concerning the moral rectitude, or pravity of his own actions; and if thoſe opinions and judgements be various, and even *contrary*, as he allows and thinks he proves, it could be no natural, general, principle of the ſpecies: but men, in point of conſcience, would be, naturally, quite irrelative to each other: and every individual would be a diſtinct ſpecies; and could no more judge of the conſcience of another man, than he could of the conſcience of any being, whoſe nature was totally unlike his own.

But our opinions or judgements cannot make or conſtitute any principle in our nature. If I have an opinion, or if I judge, that any thing will be

good

good for, or pleaſing to, my nature; which, on experiment, proves evil, and diſpleaſing; my opinion or judgement cannot make it otherwiſe. Our opinions may be lightly taken up, ill-grounded, and falſe: but the principles of our nature, are the work of infinite wiſdom; deep-rooted, and invariably true. And though, at the expence of our own miſery and vexation, we may thwart and oppoſe them, yet, they can never be eradicated by any power of ours; nor can their nature be changed, by our erroneous opinions and judgements.

Mr. Locke, I remember, continued he, ſeems to think the argument concluſive, againſt innate moral principles, when he ſhews us, that, all our *ideas*, included in the *propoſitions* which he

calls moral principles, are *acquired*. But this is not going to the bottom of the matter in queſtion. Mr. Locke always carefully avoids the uſe of the word *innate*, whenever he names any of the principles, or faculties, by which we acquire our ideas of things. Yet, I think, he ſomewhere, has called them *in-born*, in the Eſſay. And in his Treatiſe of Civil Government he finds it hard to avoid innate principles; and he talks of *the principles of human nature*, more than once.

He likens the mind to a piece of white paper, ready to receive any characters or impreſſions. He informs us, that through the medium of the ſenſes, the mind is impreſſed, and receives ſuch ideas as they convey: we have therefore no *innate ideas*. True.

But

But can he juſtly ſay, we have, therefore, no *innate principles?* Certainly not. For *ideas*, and *innate principles*, are not the ſame things. *Ideas* are only the produce, and ariſe in conſequence, of *innate principles*.—Are not our ſenſes *innate*, through which we perceive thoſe ideas? Is not the mind itſelf *innate*, which perceives them?—Moſt undoubtedly. And to object, that they are dormant and uſeleſs, until they be excited to action, is frivolous: for, ſo are our hands, our feet, and all our members, and faculties; yet who can deny them to be innate, or born with us?

Through the ſenſes, which are undoubtedly innate, we receive ideas of external things: through the *moral ſenſe*, no leſs certainly innate, we receive ideas concerning moral things.

Any one, born without ſight, cannot have the leaſt idea of the objects of ſight. Any one, born without innate moral principles, or a moral ſenſe, cannot have any ideas of moral ſubjects. Reaſoning would be as vain and uſeleſs, in the one caſe, as in the other. Reaſoning cannot give ſight to the blind: reaſoning cannot give a moral ſenſe, to thoſe born without one,—it muſt be innate, or it cannot be at all.

While I was expreſſing my ſatisfaction with my friends arguments, and going to extend my enquiries farther; ſome company arrived, who joined us, and continued with us till after dinner.

DIALOGUE III.

TOWARDS the evening, our company took their leave of us: and my friend and I, according to our custom walked in the adjacent fields; where, on the first opportunity I renewed the converſation, in which we were interrupted, in the morning.

You will excuſe me, ſaid I, though, perhaps, by this time, I ought to be fully ſatisfied of the exiſtence of *innate moral principles*; if I ſtill continue to trouble you, with a few more of Mr. Locke's objections, which are thought to carry ſome weight with them.—He ſmiled aſſent.—You know what ſtreſs,

Mr. Locke *, lays upon the want of univerſal conſent to thoſe *propoſitions*, which he gives us for *innate moral principles*, if any be ſo. I do replied he. But, as I think we agreed, that *propoſitions* were not *innate principles*, nor any way ſimiliar to them; it ſhould ſeem, what he hath ſaid upon that head, cannot be much to our preſent purpoſe. However, continued he, it may not be improper to ſay ſomewhat on that ſubject, if it be only to endeavour to ſhew, what ſort of univerſality it is reaſonable to expect in human nature: and in this, I think, Mr. Locke will materially help us out.

But to facilitate our inquiry, it will be proper, to explain, more ſtrictly, the ſenſe of ſome words, which we already have uſed, and may again fre-

* Eſſay XXVI. p. 20. 30, and 31.

quently

quently uſe, in the courſe of it. I mean the words, *conſcience*, *moral ſenſe*, and, *innate moral principles*; which, I think, have been, and may be, generally uſed promiſcuouſly, as ſignificant of the ſame things.

By theſe words, then, I mean, an *innate ſenſe*, implanted in our nature, as *moral agents*, by the great Creator of all things: by which, we are made *ſenſible*, of the right and wrong, of the juſt and unjuſt, of the moral beauty and deformity, of human actions and of human minds: and, to which we muſt refer, *as to the only true criterion*, in all our reaſonings that concern, the juſt rights of mankind, the natural and moral obligations we are under to others, and to ourſelves, and, in general, the moral happineſs or miſery of the human ſpecies.

Now I know of no objections againſt the univerſal exiſtence of this *moral ſenſe* in mankind, which do not lie equally againſt the univerſal exiſtence of all our other ſenſes. Total want, and privation, are objections, as far as they extend: but imperfection or defectiveneſs, is no objection againſt the univerſality of *the exiſtence* of our ſenſes. Sight and hearing are poſſeſſed by men from the greateſt human perfection, down to the moſt imperfect and defective. Blindneſs and deafneſs are the only exceptions againſt the univerſality of ſight and hearing. Conſcience alſo, is naturally inherent in all mankind: but, as in the ſenſes of ſight and hearing, with various degrees of ſenſibility and clearneſs, it may deſcend, from the greateſt perfection, down to the moſt defective dullneſs,

dullneſs. But, like the ſenſe of feeling, it ſeems to be ſo cloſely inherent in us; that it is hard to conceive, how a living man can be *totally* deprived of it. *Idiotiſm*, and *madneſs*, may diſable him, for perceiving its effects; and in *infancy* he may be incapable; for good reaſons, which will be ſhewn hereafter: and theſe are the only exceptions againſt its univerſality in human nature: but they are not exceptions againſt the univerſality of its *exiſtence*; they are only exceptions againſt the univerſal *perception* of it.—I believe you are right, ſaid I: but do you not think it an objection to this moral ſenſe, that men are not equally quick and fine in their feelings of it's operations and effects?—It certainly can be no objection to it's *exiſtence*, replied he; any more, than to the

the exiſtence of the other ſenſes.—But do you, then, ſuppoſe, interrogated I, that the perſpicacity, or dullneſs, of the conſcience, or moral ſenſe, bears any proportion to the ſtrength or weakneſs of our mental faculties?—I really cannot ſay, anſwered he, what proportion they may bear to each other: but I know, that our *perception* of the effects of conſcience, as well, as, of the effects of the other ſenſes, will be clear or otherwiſe, according to the ſtrength or weakneſs of our underſtandings. This is a matter of daily and continual experience. And, indeed, it is one very rational way of accounting, for the ſeemingly great diverſity of men's thoughts and opinions; which certainly does not ariſe from any difference in their natural principles, (only in the degrees

degrees of more or leſs perfect) or from any natural difference in their way of perceiving things; but, from the clearneſs or obſcurity, ſtrength or weakneſs of their mental abilities.—But, does not this argument, demanded I, make againſt the *efficacy* of the *conſcience*, as a moral guide?—No more replied he, than it does, againſt the *efficacy* of the *other ſenſes*, for their ſeveral uſes.

For my part, continued he, I do not pretend to fathom the depths of infinite wiſdom. I do not, therefore, aſk, why every principle of our nature is not preciſely and univerſally the ſame, as to meaſure and degree, in the whole ſpecies. I perceive, as to meaſure and degree, that every principle differs in almoſt every individual: and I alſo

perceive, that there is an *univerſality, in the kind, and nature,* of every principle, given by the Deity to the whole human ſpecies: and indeed to every other ſpecies of creatures; notwithſtanding thoſe differences in degree.

That every ſingle animal of the ſame ſpecies differs from others, does not ſo far ſhock me, as to make me conclude, that the principles of their nature, are not the *ſame in kind.* Much leſs does it affect me, in the human ſpecies, when I conſider man as a rational creature in *a higher degree*; as a free agent in point of morals, indued with innate conſcious principles; and as the elector and chuſer of his own moral happineſs or miſery. For ſurely, whoever will conſider theſe diſtinctions; what they are in us; and how we are

affected

affected by them, cannot be much ſurpriſed to find more diverſity in men, than in any other kind of creatures, whoſe natures are reſtrained to inſtincts, and who are incapable of any degree of moral free agency.

To be calling out, therefore, for univerſality of conſent, on theſe occaſions, ſeems to me, to be only taking an unfair advantage of the almoſt inexplicable diverſity; to be found in human minds, and in human actions; with which any acute man, if he pleaſe, may puzzle others and himſelf. But amidſt all this diverſity, when we *candidly* ſurvey the conduct of our ſpecies, we can eaſily perceive them to be actuated, generally and univerſally, by the ſame natural principles. And, indeed, as we have ſeen, if it were not

not ſo, they could not ſympathize; there could be no conſent of natures in them; nor could they ever underſtand each others meaning at all.

But, as I have ſaid, Mr. Locke himſelf will materially help us out, in this argument. Then taking, the Eſſay on Human Underſtanding, out of his pocket, he turned to page 139, and read as follows:

"The knowing preciſely what our "words ſtand for, would, I imagine *, "in this, as well as a great many "other caſes, end the diſpute. For I "am apt to think that men, when they "come to examine them, find their "ſimples *ideas* all generally to agree, "though in diſcourſe with one ano-"ther, they perhaps confound one "another

* See alſo p. 185 and 330.

" another with different names. I
" imagine, that men who abſtract their
" thoughts, and do well examine the
" *ideas* of their own minds, *can-*
" *not much differ in thinking*; how-
" ever they may perplex them-
" ſelves with words, according to the
" way of ſpeaking of the ſeveral
" ſchools or ſects they have been bred
" up in: though amongſt unthinking
" men, who examine not ſcrupulouſly
" and carefully their own *ideas*, and
" ſtrip them not from the marks men
" uſe for them, but confound them
" with words, there muſt be endleſs
" diſpute, wrangling and jargon, eſpe-
" cially if they be learned bookiſh men
" devoted to ſome ſect, and accuſtomed
" to the language of it; and have
" learned to talk after others. But if

" it

" it ſhould happen, that any two " thinking men ſhould really have dif- " ferent *ideas*, I do not ſee how they " could diſcourſe or argue one with " another." Here, it ſeems, ſaid he, Mr. Locke does not ſee how men, could diſcourſe or argue together, unleſs their ſimple ideas were *the ſame*. Nor do I. But their ſimple ideas, cannot be *the ſame*, unleſs their *ſenſes*, through which they are perceived, be *the ſame*. If the *ſenſes* be *the ſame*, the univerſality of the ſenſes can have no exceptions, but thoſe we have already named. And, if we have proved the exiſtence of *a moral ſenſe* neceſſary, (as I think we have, from the impoſſibility of men's diſcourſing intelligibly about morals without it) there can be no objections to its univerſality, but thoſe we

we have mentioned. You are doubtleſs in the right, ſaid I; yet you know, Mr. Locke has been pleaſed to advance, that if we had any innate moral principles, infants, idiots, and madmen, would be more clearly ſenſible of them than other people; becauſe, leſs corrupted by habits, and by the prejudices and cuſtoms of the world.—He has ſo, replied he: but here it can be of no force; becauſe Mr. Locke's *moral principles*, as I muſt again repeat, were only *moral propoſitions*. According to our explication and ideas of *innate moral principles*, nothing can be more abſurd. Would it not be as reaſonable to ſay, that, *infants* by their helpleſs ignorance and inexperience; that *idiots*, by their total want of underſtanding and capacity; and that *madmen*, by the

diſtraction and diſorder of their minds; are in a better condition on theſe accounts, to diſtinguiſh nicely, and to judge accurately, of their ſenſations, and moral ſentiments? In truth, minds thus ſituated, are too weak, or too confuſed and diſtracted, to be able to judge, or even to be ſenſible, of their own helpleſs and miſerable condition.

But as Mr. Locke denies, that we have any innate moral principles at all; he ſuppoſes and aſſumes, what he can neither ſuppoſe or aſſume of any other principle of our nature: he ſuppoſes, that if we have any innate principles of morality, they muſt not only be *born with us*; but they muſt be born with us, ready moulded and formed into ſuch evident and indiſputable *propoſitions*, as no man can deny. This is ſtrange.

Do

Do we ſay, that the ſenſe of hearing is not innate, becauſe we are not born perfectly accompliſhed in muſic? Do we infer, that our ſight is not innate, becauſe we are not born opticians?—Certainly not. Why, then, ſhould we preſume, that our conſcience is not innate, becauſe we are not born moral philoſophers? If, to the ſight, to the hearing, and to the other ſenſes, time and experience be allowed neceſſary; and if, to adjuſt properly the ideas and thoughts they convey to us, underſtanding, attention, and judgement be wanting; why may we not, as reaſonably, allow, the ſame time and experience; the ſame underſtanding, attention, and judgement, to be requiſite to the nature and proper conduct of our

innate moral ſenſe? — It ſeems reaſonable, anſwered I.

In the imbecility of infancy, and giddineſs of childhood, continued he, we are but poorly qualified, for making nice obſervations on our ſenſations and ideas of any ſort: but much leſs on thoſe of the moral kind; becauſe the nature of our condition is, then, ſuch as ſcarcely, if at all, places us in the circumſtances of moral agents. In infancy, it is out of the queſtion: and in childhood, there are but few calls for the exerciſe of conſcience, which is wiſely ordered, for then we have but little judgement to obſerve its effects. God has naturally placed us, at theſe times, and much longer, under the care and tuition of parents; clearly indicating thereby, our inexperience and

want

want of capacity to govern ourſelves. In ſhort, in morals, as in every thing elſe, our knowledge is progreſſive: and whoever deſires to be a proficient in that ſcience, will find, that experience, application, and good ſenſe, are, at leaſt, as requiſite, as they are to the learning of any other inferior art or ſcience. Nor does the nature and circumſtances of human life, by any means, require, what Mr. Locke aſſumes to be neceſſary as an evidence of innate moral principles, i. e. that they ſhould be *ſo born with us*, as to be inſtantaneouſly perceptible in the forms of indiſputably true propoſitions. For though all our faculties of mind and body, be born with us; yet, as the moſt perfect uſe, and higheſt perfection, of any one of them, is not naturally requiſite, or

uſeful, in infancy or childhood; God having created both our minds and bodies in a progreſſive, and not in a perfect or full grown, ſtate; to object againſt any one of them, as not innate, becauſe it is not born with us, perfect or full-grown; is only to object againſt it, becauſe it is not, what it was never intended to be: and the ſame objection may, as reaſonably, be made againſt the innateneſs of every part or faculty of a man's body. Your ſenſes may be as ſtrong, as clear, and as perfect, as ever human ſenſes were; your *moral ſenſe*, may be as true, and as juſt; and though all be innate, yet is the knowledge acquired by them progreſſive; and perfected, if ever perfected, by ſlow degrees: nor do I ſee the leaſt reaſon for excluding the *moral ſenſe* out of this

predicament. For my part, I can perceive nothing in all this, but what is intirely natural, and quite conſonant to the condition and circumſtances of humanity. Here he pauſed.—I cannot diſſent from you, ſaid I. Yet, you know, Mr. Locke ſpeaks of ſoldiers in armies *, and even of whole nations, whom, he ſuppoſes to be entirely devoid of conſcience or any moral ſentiment. He does ſo, replied he, but that is but a continuation of the ſame error; and muſt be anſwered by the ſame kind of reaſoning we have already employed; of which, perhaps, by this time, you have heard more than enough. I aſſured him of his miſtake, and begged him to proceed; and he continued thus.

* Eſſay p. 34.

If there were really whole nations, as Mr. Locke contends *, (confiding in the wonderful ſtories of marvellous travellers) that coolly, deliberately, and *without any remorſe at all*, could deſtroy their own children; and if ſuch actions, were not the effects, of ſome gloomy and horrid ſuperſtitions; of ſome very preſſing fears of ſhame or want; or, of ſome corrupt affections, or violent and unruly paſſions; it would certainly be a very extraordinary phenomenon: and ſo very contrary to the nature and conduct of every other ſpecies of creatures in the world, that we know of; that it would be a very odious and diſgraceful peculiarity, in that ſpecies of animals, which has been generally eſteemed, the nobleſt upon earth.

* Eſſay, p. 34.

I muſt own, my nature ſhudders, when I read, what Mr. Locke ſeems to deſcribe with ſo much coldneſs and indifference. He deſires us to "view "an army at the ſacking of a town, "and ſee what obſervation, or ſenſe of "moral principles, or what touch of "conſcience (they feel) for all the "outrages they do. Robberies, mur-"ders, rapes, are the ſports of men ſet "at liberty from *cenſure*." All the other cruelties which he continues to deſcribe in the ſame page, he very unnaturally preſumes, to be done *without ſcruple, without any remorſe at all.* Could any thing be more cruelly unjuſt to others, than to preſume thus much? Could any thing be more unphiloſophical? Unjuſt to others, becauſe his own heart, I will believe for his honour, could never

never exhibit to himſelf a capability of perpetrating the crimes he mentions, *without ſcruple, or without any remorſe at all.* Unphiloſophical, becauſe, lightly deeming them the *ſports* of men ſet at liberty from *cenſure*, he does not endeavour to inveſtigate their cauſes, and ſhew them to be the effects, of what, they really are effects: in war, of furious paſſions, heated imaginations, and turbulent appetites: in the other caſes, of gloomy and debaſing ſuperſtitions; of ſtrong fears of ſhame or want; or, of ſome other perverted affection, or urgent and forcible paſſion. But why he ſhould preſume, that after ſuch actions men *feel no remorſe at all*, I know not: it is undoubtedly a mere preſumption without any rational evidence: for, I am certain Mr. Locke could

could have no evidence of any ſuch thing in himſelf.

It is true, indeed, that while men continue under the influence of ſtrong affections, violent paſſions, or enthuſiaſtic illuſions, they are but little ſenſible of the operations of conſcience within them: but to infer from hence, that they have no *conſcience*, no internal *moral ſenſe*, would certainly be a very haſty, and injudicious conclusion: becauſe, we might with as much reaſon infer, they have, no eyes, no ears, no feeling; for, under the influence of ſuch affections, paſſions, and illuſions, men frequently can neither, ſee, hear or feel.—I gave an aſſenting motion.

When we ſpeak, ſaid he, more within compaſs of our own experience

and

and knowledge of human nature; we can ſpeak with more certainty, and with better evidence, to ourſelves, to our friends, and to thoſe who are of the ſame nation, or of the ſame quarter of the world with ourſelves. But when we range about the earth, with voyagers and travellers, who are generally but too well diſpoſed to fancy things to be wonderful and extraordinary, which they are unuſed to; and who are, moſt of them, but very ill-qualified to give us juſt accounts of the laws, cuſtoms, and religions of nations; who, if they were qualified, ſeldom ſtay long enough any where, either to learn the language or underſtand the manners of the people whom they viſit; and, who, can only judge, and that groſſly, of the effects which

come

come under their obſervation, but of whoſe cauſes they muſt often be ignorant, or but very incompetent judges; I ſay when we range about the earth with them, taking their ſtrange accounts, for indubitable facts, we muſt ſurely be very well inclined to ſwallow any thing to ſerve our preſent purpoſe.

The truth is this, that if there were ſuch nations, ſuch creatures in the form of men, as theſe monſter-loving voyagers tell us of; and as Mr. Locke ſeems ſo eaſily to believe there are; and who could perpetrate, as he aſſumes, all the unnatural barbarities he names, *without ſcruple*, or *without any remorſe at all*; the only rational inference to be drawn from it, is, *that they are not of the ſame ſpecies with ourſelves*: for they, moſt undoubtedly, differ extremely from

from all that we know of humanity within the compaſs of our own experience, and of our own internal feelings. In ſhort, any unprejudiced man would find it as eaſy to believe, that there were whole nations born deaf or blind, or without any of the ſenſes.

I muſt confeſs, replied I, after what has been ſaid, on the univerſality of the ſenſes, and of the moral ſenſe; and after what Mr. Locke himſelf advances, concerning the impoſſibility of men's underſtanding each other in diſcourſe, unleſs their ſimple ideas were the ſame; I think, there can be no doubt of his miſtake in this queſtion. However, with your leave, I will ſtill trouble you a little longer.

Mr. Locke, after explaining to us the

the natures of *pain* and *pleaſure** ; and informing us that, "these like other "simple *ideas* cannot be deſcribed nor "their names defined; the way of "knowing them being, as of the "simple *ideas* of the ſenſes, only by "experience:" concludes in the next ſection, "things then are good or evil "only in reference to pleaſure or pain." You mention this; no doubt, ſaid he, as a thing, about which, you are not ſatisfied. And it is certainly, in a *moral ſenſe*, but a very groſs account of *good* and *evil*: and even in a *phyſical ſenſe* it will not bear a ſcrutiny.

Though it be true, that pain or pleaſure do, immediately or ultimately, reſult from all our actions, as moral agents; yet to conclude generally, that things are good or evil, *only* in

* Eſſay, p. 185.

refe-

reference to pleaſure or pain; is a very conſiderable error. For, in a moral view, things are really good, or really evil, according as they ſerve or injure, or tend to ſerve or injure, the true intereſts of humanity; independently of the pain or pleaſure, that may accompany them. Pleaſure or pain, ſimply conſidered, do not *conſtitute* what is morally good, or evil, in our nature: they are *only concomitants* of our good, or evil, actions: and more often ultimately, than immediately. For the pains of vice, and the pleaſures of virtue, are never ſo ſenſibly felt in the purſuit, as after the accompliſhment.

Many things are morally good, and productive of the beſt moral effects, although accompanied with much *pain* and anxiety. As, when our affections

are

are disordered and misplaced, and our indulged passions are become turbulent and unruly, so that the oppressed voice of nature can hardly be heard in us; who is not sensible, that nature thus overstrained and thrown out of her true and proper course, cannot be brought back again to a due temper, and just balance, without much *painful* attention and perseverance? Things, therefore, are not morally good or evil, *only* in reference to pleasure or pain. And as much may be said physically, and with as good reasons: for, there are many *painful* and troublesome operations in physic, which are very conducive, and even quite necessary to the *good* and health of the body.——True, said I. But do you, then, deny, that pain is *evil*, and that pleasure is *good*,

in an abſtracted ſenſe? In theſe abſtruſe queſtions, replied he, we are apt to be puzzled by the abuſe of words; and the preſent difficulty is of that ſort. That *pain* is *grievous*, there can be no doubt: and if we confine the ſenſe of the word *evil*, to ſignify *grievous* only, then *pain* is *evil*: but when we extend the ſenſe of the word *evil*, and make it ſignify *all evil, moral and phyſical*, or leave it to ſignify, indeterminately, what every one fancies to be *evil*; then to ſay that *pain* is *evil*, is not true. *Pain* is *that ſort of evil*, which is *grievous* to the ſufferer; but *pain*, as we have ſhewn, both morally and phyſically, is frequently productive of *very great good* to mankind. So *pleaſure*, abſtractedly, is *delightful*: which, indeed, is only ſaying, that pleaſure is

what

what it is. But when we ſay, that *pleaſure* is *good*; that muſt depend upon the ſignification we give to the word *good*. If by *good*, we mean only *pleaſant*, then, it is indiſputable: but if by *good*, we mean *morally right, juſt, or reaſonable*; or, in a phyſical ſenſe, *conducive to health*; nothing can be more clearly falſe.

Here we were interrupted by the preſence of the ladies who came out to meet us; when our converſation turning upon more agreeable things, our diſcourſes on theſe ſubjects ended, and were not renewed, during my ſtay in the country.

FINIS.

BRITISH
8 EE 92
MUSEUM